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Contact

Melissa Weber, Director of Communications
Phone: 320-589-6414, weberm@morris.umn.edu

Jenna Ray, Editor/Writer
Phone: 320-589-6068, jrray@morris.umn.edu

Bruno '13 helps to spruce up Wheaton's mainstreet

Summary: Sam Bruno '13 worked with faculty, the Center for Small Towns, and the Wheaton Makeover Committee to enliven Wheaton's mainstreet.

(September 30, 2010)-At the University of Minnesota, Morris (UMM) students get a chance to experience a wide array of opportunities, and Sam Bruno '13, Foley, is the perfect example. She is a studio art major, UMM's Quidditch league commissioner, and a presenter at conferences dedicated to broadband Internet research. But over the past summer, she added improving the look and functionality of the mainstreet in Wheaton to her diverse list of activities.

The project was set up through The Center for Small Towns, a community outreach program housed at the University of Minnesota, Morris, and funded by the Bremer Foundation. Over the summer, Bruno worked with two faculty mentors to help Wheaton develop short and long term goals for their mainstreet area. Tom Gausman, lecturer in economics and management, advised Bruno on economic and business decisions, while Michael Eble, associate professor of studio art, advised her on the look and feel of the mainstreet.

With almost no experience in working on city projects, Bruno said she basically "went in blind and had to soak up information like crazy." Working with members of the Wheaton's Mainstreet Makeover Committee, Bruno helped restore the look and feel of mainstreet by touching up the paint, adding more green spaces, and creating more signs that direct people to significant spots on the street. Most notably may have been her work to make the museum in town more publicized and visible. The museum features military equipment and uniforms from virtually every American war, and now sees many more visitors.

Those accomplishments did not come without challenges. Working with two professors and members of the community that were all very busy is difficult in and of itself, but Bruno said it really taught her how to take charge and be a strong leader. After seeing all of the improvements and how much it meant to members of the Wheaton community, Bruno was happy to see the results of her hard work. "They were so dedicated to their town," Sam said, "Universities are such a powerful entity. If we can apply that to surrounding communities, great things can happen."

Photo below: Bruno and Wheaton Mainstreet Makeover Committee

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